"Going out on your own" is a dream of many emerging professionals in the design, planning and allied professions. This course is a hands-on seminar/design workshop for students who want develop a modest startup professional service firm within one to five years of graduation. Our journey will simulate the startup process from concept to launch. We will address both the pragmatics and the art of starting a design services practice that is plausibly buildable. We will begin with your interests and ideas for a practice venture that aligns with real customer segments in the design marketplace – what needs you want to satisfy and why; what pains you want to cure and how; what services you will offer and where. Whether your value propositions emphasize the “service” or “product” of your design practice, you will minimally envision a business that involves design firm economics. With permission, and based on individual qualifications, you may opt to additionally develop a tandem business in product manufacturing, building construction, or real estate development. Startup ventures may be located anywhere in the United States. Weekly assignments will introduce core competencies required to start a design business, including: market research, positioning, strategic branding and identity design, business formation and planning, canvassing prospective customers, startup expense budgeting and profit planning, operational design and business formation, brochure design, website design, and pitching. A final presentation to mock prospective clients/investors will test your readiness to launch. At term’s end, students will assemble completed assignments into a cumulative “Startup Portfolio”, which will serve as a useful reference for a future (real) venture. Grading will be based on individual efforts in completing and presenting assignments and contributing to the work of colleagues.

(Completion of Arch 583, Professional Practice, is not a pre-requisite.)